DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 084 969 HE 004 858

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TITLE	Job Attitudes of Student Personnel Workers and Their Work Situations. Office for Student Affairs Research Bulletin, Vol. 14 No. 2 October 17, 1973.
INSTITUTION	Minnesota Univ., Minneapolis. Office for Student Affairs.
PUB DATE	17 Oct 73
NOTE	14p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Counselor Attitudes; *Higher Education; *Job Satisfaction; Organizational Climate; Research Projects; *Social Characteristics; Statistical Data; *Student Personnel Services; Work Environment
IDENTIFIERS	*University of Minnesota

ABSTRACT

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office for student affairs RESEARCH BULLETIN

ED 084969

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Results of the study showed that social characteristics of the offices but not the coalition were somewhat related to staff job satisfaction. Social characteristics of both offices and the coalition were found to be related to job alienation. Efforts to clarify job expectations and moves to foster greater inter-office communication could affect staff job alienation.

HE 004 858

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university of minnesota Volume 14 Number 2 October 17, 1973

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Student personnel workers in large universities are often part of two overlapping work situations. They are employed in individual offices which offer specialized services, and they are also employed in coalitions of offices which are usually organized under a Vice President or Dean for Student Affairs. If the sources of job satisfaction inhere in work situations more than in personality traits or workers (Pallone, Hurley and Rickard, 1971), student personnel workers' levels of job satisfaction may be related to the social characteristics of their two work situations. Even though job satisfaction probably does not bear either a causal or simple relationship to work-related performance (Seigel and Bowen, 1971), job satisfaction does represent an important facet of job behavior. If nothing else, dissatisfied staff probably are not among the most pleasant colleagues with whom to work, and their supervisors may find that they spend an inordinate amount of time talking to these staff members about their dissatisfaction. Another important attitude of student personnel workers is their feelings of job alienation which can be defined as a sense of powerlessness in trying to influence policy-making processes in their work situations. Although job alienation probably is not directly related in some simple or causal fashion to job performance, staff who feel quite powerless in affecting policy-making processes in their work situations would probably reflect such an attitude in their relationships to students, colleagues and supervisors.

This study examines four questions: 1) What is the relationship between the social characteristics of a student personnel office and staff job satisfaction?

2) What is the relationship between the social characteristics of a student personnel coalition and staff job satisfaction? 3) What is the relationship between the social characteristics of a student personnel office and staff job alienation? 4) What is the relationship between the social characteristics of a student personnel coalition and staff job alienation?

Method

Sample

The sample was composed of 174 professional staff members of 15 different offices in the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs at the University of Minnesota. Eighty-five percent (N=148) of them completed the questionnaire. The lowest rate of return (55%) was from the University Health Service. The return rate from the rest of the offices was seventy-eight percent or more. Sixty-six percent of the sample were males, fifty-eight percent were over thirty-five years of age, and sixty-four percent had been employed in the Office for Student Affairs under six years. Thirty-six percent had received Doctoral degrees, thirty-two percent had received terminal Masters degrees and twenty-one percent had some post-Baccalaureate education but less than a Masters degree. Forty-five percent of the sample indicated their major academic area of concentration was Psychology or Education, twelve percent said their major academic area was medicine. The academic backgrounds of the rest of the staff were diversified.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire contained items about socio-demographic characteristics of staff. They reported their age, sex, years of employment in the coalition and their highest level of academic achievement.

Staff members reported some social characteristics of their offices. They described job expectations, affective characteristics of their offices and amount

of communication within their offices. Three items concerned conflicting job expectations. Items had to do with whether their job expectations often differed with those of their supervisors, with their own values, and with their personal life. Alpha, (Cronbach, 1951) an internal consistency reliability for this set of items was adequate (α.58). Clarity of job expectations was assessed by agreement (1 = a great deal, 5 = not at all) with the statement - the expectations for my job have not been clearly stated. Individuals completed four items concerning how cohesive they found their offices. These items had to do with whether they would attend an office reunion if they no longer worked at the University, whether they belonged to recreational or social groups with staff members from their offices, whether they enjoyed spending non-working time with staff from their office, and whether they often, during non-working hours, telephoned other staff to chat. Internal consistency reliability for this set of items was adequate (α.74). Respondents also reported on a five point scale (none; a few (1-10%); some (11-20%); many (21-40%); very many (more than 40%)) what percentage of their friends were from their offices. Finally, staff members completed four items concerning amount of formal and informal communication within their offices. They reported on a five point scale (1 = every day, 2 = several times a week, 3 = several times a month, 4 = less than once a month, 5 = less than twice a year) how frequently they had office staff meetings, they met with their immediate supervisor to discuss job-related matters, they attended social events with their immediate supervisor, and they attended social events with other staff in their office. Internal consistency reliability for this set of items was adequate (α.57).

The next set of questions concerned some social characteristics of the coalition: Amount of communication with staff in other coalition offices, perceived power of an office in the coalition, perceived interdependency with other coalition offices, perceived power of an office in the coalition, perceived benefits from belonging to the coalition, number of friends from other coalition offices, perceived commonality job goals with staff in other coalition offices, and perceived social status in the coalition.

Staff reported how frequently (1 = every day, 2 = several times a week, 3 = several times a month, 4 = less than once a month, 5 = less than twice a year) they communicated with staff in other offices in the coalition. Ratings were summated. Internal consistency reliability for this set of ratings was adequate (α.85). In order to assess perceived office power in the coalition, staff members indicated how much influence (1 = a great deal, 2 = a moderate degree, 3 = undecided, 4 = very little, 5 = not at all) their office had in decisions made by the Central Office for Student Affairs. Two questions asked about perceived interdependence of offices in the coalition. They reported on a five point scale (1 = a great deal, 3 = undecided, 5 = not at all) how much their offices were affected when staff members in other offices in the coalition received good or bad publicity. Staff members then reported how similar (1 = very similar, 5 = very different) their job goals were to the staff in other offices in the coalition. Ratings were summated. Internal consistency reliability for these ratings was adequate (α.92). Two similarly worded questions asked how much (1 = a great deal, 3 = undecided, 5 = not at all) staff members benefitted because their jobs and offices were in the Office for Student Affairs. Items were summated. Internal consistency reliability for these two items was adequate (α.89). Staff indicated what percentage a = none, b = a few (1-10%), c = some (11-20%), d = many (21-40%), e = very many (more than 40%) of their friends were from other offices in the coalition. Finally, staff ranked (1 = very low status, 2 = moderately low status, 3 = neutral, 4 = moderately high status, 5 = very high status) each office according to their status within the coalition.

Two dependent variables were job satisfaction and job alienation. The three item job satisfaction scale asked in general how satisfied (1 = completely satisfied, 3 = indifferent, 5 = completely dissatisfied) were the respondents with their present job, the job performance of other staff in their office and the way their office was administered. Internal consistency reliability for these items was adequate (α.63). Staff were also asked three other questions about job satisfaction which were not included in the scale. They indicated their degree of satisfaction with the administration of

the Central Office for Student Affairs, the job performance of students, and the job performance of faculty with whom they have contact. The three-item job alienation scale asked to what degree (1 = a great deal, 3 = undecided, 5 = not at all) staff felt they could influence their immediate supervisor, other staff members in their office, and the Vice President for Student Affairs in policy making matters. Internal consistency reliability for these items was adequate (α .77).

Statistical Method

Multiple regression analyses were used to examine relationships between two sets of independent variables: Social characteristics of the offices and social characteristics of the coalition; and the two dependent variables: Job alienation and job satisfaction of staff members. Since the number of professional staff in an office could be considered a coalition or office characteristic, this variable was used in both multiple regression analyses.

Results

Job Satisfaction and Office and Coalition Work Situations

Table 1 shows responses of the staff to six questions about job satisfaction. Most staff were satisfied with their present jobs, other staff in their offices and the way their offices were administered. Less than fifty percent of the staff were satisfied with the way the Office for Student Affairs was administrered and with the job performance of student leaders with whom they have contact.

The first question in the study concerned the relationship between the social characteristics of student personnel offices and staff job satisfaction. Results of a multiple regression analysis between social characteristics of the offices and staff job satisfaction are shown in Table 2. The multiple correlation was significant ($p \leq .05$). However, this set of office characteristics accounted for very little of the variance (11%) in job satisfaction of student personnel workers. Among the variables, amount of conflicting job expectations made the largest relative contribution (six percent of the variance, $F = 4.20$) to explaining differences in levels of job satisfaction. Higher rates

of conflicting job expectations were related to less job satisfaction.

The second question in the study concerned the relationship between the social characteristics of the coalition and staff job satisfaction. The social characteristics of the coalition were not significantly (F = .18) related to staff job satisfaction (see Table 2). These characteristics accounted for only two percent of the variance in job satisfaction of student personnel workers.

Job Alienation and Office and Coalition Work Situations

Table 3 shows responses of staff to questions about their perceived power to influence key people in their work situations. Staff seem to feel less powerless in their offices than in the coalition. Although a majority of staff thought they had very much or a great deal of power to influence policy matters in their offices, almost half of the staff thought they had comparatively little or no ability to influence Office for Student Affairs policy-making matters.

The third question had to do with the relationship between social characteristics of student personnel offices and staff members' feelings of job alienation. The social characteristics of student personnel offices were significantly ($p \leq .05$) but not appreciably related to job alienation of staff members (see Table 4.) Only twelve percent of the variance in job alienation can be accounted for by differences in these characteristics. Among the variables, clarity of job expectations made the largest relative contribution (5% of the variance, F = 3.70) to explaining differences in feelings of job alienation. The more that staff felt their job expectations were clear, the less they felt alienated or powerless. The number of professional staff in an office made the next largest relative contribution (3% of the variance, F = 2.59) to explaining differences in feelings of job alienation. Staff in larger offices tended to report feeling more alienated from policy-making matters in their work situations.

The final question in the study concerned the relationship between social characteristics of the student personnel coalition and staff members' feelings of job alienation. Social characteristics of the coalition were significantly ($p \leq .01$) related to feelings

of job alienation (see Table 4). About twenty percent of the variance in job alienation can be accounted for by differences in these social characteristics of the coalition. Frequency of inter-office communication made the largest relative contribution (9% of the variance, F = 3.74) to explaining differences in job alienation. Staff members who communicated more frequently with the staff in other offices in the coalition tended to feel less alienated in their jobs.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined the job satisfaction and job alienation of student personnel staff members in a coalition of offices in a large urban university. The purposes were to describe the relationships between the social characteristics of their offices and social characteristics of their coalition and these job attitudes.

Although most staff were very satisfied with their jobs, a fairly large percentage were either indifferent or dissatisfied with the administration of the Central Office for Student Affairs, as well as the job performance of student leaders with whom they came in contact. These results could be influenced by the fact that at the time of the study, the President of the student association was involved in a conflict with the Vice President for Student Affairs.

Even though the social characteristics of student personnel offices were somewhat, but not appreciably, related to staff job satisfaction, the social characteristics of the student personnel coalition were not related to job satisfaction. Thus the correlates of job satisfaction of student personnel workers do not seem to inhere in the social characteristics of their work situations. The lack of significant relationships between student personnel staff members' work situations and their job satisfaction is somewhat surprising. This study does not lend support to many "folklore" theories about the relationship between job satisfaction of student personnel workers and the cohesiveness of their offices.

Future research should consider other methods of measuring job satisfaction. The

one used in this study may be inadequate. A better measure might include a measure of the discrepancy between what student personnel workers want from their jobs and what they perceive their jobs are offering as well as some index of the importance of given job characteristics to them.

Most staff feel less alienated or powerless in affecting office policy matters than in affecting policy matters in the coalition. Social characteristics of offices and the coalition were significantly related to staff members' feelings of job alienation. Significant correlates of job alienation of student personnel workers were clarity of job expectations and frequency of inter-office communication.

TABLE 1

JOB SATISFACTION

OF STUDENT PERSONNEL STAFF MEMBERS

	SATISFIED	INDIFFERENT	DISSATISFIED
Satisfaction with present job	91%	1%	7%
Satisfaction with job performance of other staff in Office	84%	4%	12%
Satisfaction with the way their Office is administered	79%	7%	14%
Satisfaction with the administration of Central Office for Student Affairs.	46%	34%	19%
Satisfaction with job performance of student leaders with whom they come in contact.	49%	31%	20%
Satisfaction with teaching faculty with whom they come in contact.	71%	22%	7%

TABLE 2

MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT PERSONNEL

WORK SITUATIONS AND STAFF JOB SATISFACTION (N=105)

OFFICE CHARACTERISTICS	R	r	BETA
Clarity of job expectations	.17	-.17	-.11
Office cohesiveness	.25	.17	.14
Number of professional staff in office	.26	-.07	-.03
Conflicting job expectations	.33	-.28	-.22
Number of friends in office	.34	-.12	-.06
Frequency of intra-office communication	.34	.12	.00

COALITION CHARACTERISTICS	R	r	BETA
Perceived negative inter-dependence with staff in other coalition offices	.03	.03	.02
Status of office	.04	.00	-.00
Number of professional staff in office	.09	-.07	-.04
Perceived commonality of job goals with staff in other coalition offices	.09	-.01	.01
Perceived office power in coalition	.09	-.00	.02
Number of friends in other coalition offices	.09	.02	-.00
Perceived benefits of coalition	.09	.00	.05
Frequency of inter-office communication	.12	-.09	-.12
Perceived positive inter-dependence with staff in other coalition offices	.13	.04	.04

TABLE 3

JOB ALIENATION OF

STUDENT PERSONNEL WORKERS

	Very much/ A great deal	To some degree	Comparatively little/not at all
1. Do you think you could influence your immediate supervisor on office policy?	61%	36%	3%
2. Do you think you could influence other staff in your office on office policy?	68%	29%	3%
3. Do you think you could influence the Vice President for Student Affairs on Office for Student Affairs policy?	12%	39%	49%

TABLE 4

MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSES OF THE SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT PERSONNEL WORK SITUATIONS AND STAFF JOB ALIENATION (N = 105)

OFFICE CHARACTERISTICS	R	r	BETA
Clarity of job expectations	.23	-.23	-.20
Office cohesiveness	.27	.13	.06
Number of professional staff in office	.32	.16	.16
Conflicting job expectations	.33	-.13	-.07
Number of friends in office	.33	.03	.05
Frequency of intra-office communication	.35	.22	.15
COALITION CHARACTERISTICS	**R**	**r**	**BETA**
Perceived office power in coalition	.26	.26	.13
Status of office	.31	-.20	-.11
Number of friends in other coalition offices	.35	-.20	-.07
Perceived positive interdependence with other coalition offices	.35	.15	.16
Number of professional staff in office	.36	.16	-.04
Perceived commonality of job goals with staff in other coalition offices	.38	.21	.05
Perceived benefits of coalition	.38	.26	.05
Frequency of inter-office communication	.42	.36	.25
Perceived negative interdependence with staff in other coalition offices	.44	.03	-.21

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